

University of Dundee

Editor's Letter

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Editor's Letter

Identity/exosomatic
Identity/endosomatic
Identity/Imponderabilia

With these opening lines from one of his *Aphorisms*, Ulay evokes and brings into question the radical nature of identity and its other. Holding this dialogue close and resisting the lure of giving didactic and theoretical answers to Ulay's open question, this issue of *e3labels* will follow him and others to tease out the subtle mediations that place each of us in a dialogue with the other.

Widely acknowledged as a key figure internationally in performance art, Ulay's oeuvre consistently dwells on and draws its vivaciousness from the physical, emotional and ethical limits that constitute the dialogic space between individuals. Written between 1970 and 1973, Ulay's *Aphorisms* encapsulate this disruptive praxis. Presented as a new sound and text installation work in his Cooper Gallery exhibition *so you see me*, they exemplify the abiding character of language and its possibilities of summoning the other.

Drawn from the ancient Greek 'aphorizein' which means 'to mark off, divide,' the aphorism is the ideal literary register with

which to speak of ourselves and the apparitions of the other. In his choice of words — 'exosomatic', which describes the recording of memories outside the brain, 'endosomatic', which indicates something within the body, and *Imponderabilia*, the title of the collaborative work with Abramovic in 1977 that featured them facing each other nude at the entrance to the Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna in Bologna — Ulay marks the horizons that frame the terms of relations between ourselves and the other. Seeking these horizons that appear outside, inside and between the body and the other, the artists, curators and writers gathered in this issue of *e3labels* conjure and embody the restless discursivity from which all iterations of the other arise.

For *Under Consideration*, Jane Rendell takes hold of language and its play of interpretations by exploring the differences, opaqueness and slippages called forth by words in her text *No last words: writing around Ulay's 're-re-mis-interpretation'*. Citing for example the doublets and predicates of art-writing, site-writing and life-work, Rendell inhabits a pluralised textual space in which Ulay's practice enters into and refigures her own work and thinking.

Comprised of Ulay's *Aphorisms* and Seán Elder's *Encountering [in Difference]*, *Notes from the Studio* juxtaposes two radically different approaches to identity and its differing inscriptions. Developed during his Cooper Summer Residency in 2017, Elder's piece conjugates on 'moments of gesture' and acknowledges the necessity of identity not being a conclusion; the very raison d'être of Ulay's *Aphorisms*.

Reflections & Addenda maintains this necessity through a selection of textual works all presented at the International Symposium alongside Ulay's exhibition *so you see me*. Espousing multiple registers that veer between the fictional, the apparent biographical and the intimate, the writing by Amelia Bywater, Kirsty Hendry and Seán Elder draws up a palimpsest of observations, provocations and questions that dissolve the certainties of identity and yield in its stead a fertile ground for writing the other.

For this edition of *e3labels* *What I'm reading now . . .* is provided by Morgan Quaintance. Covering pollution, class-consciousness, labour history and politics, Quaintance's selection of readings offers a timely summary of the emergencies corralling the contemporary world.

Threaded by a commitment to solidarity, the grassroots, the working class and the subcultural, the texts delineate the histories and probable futures within which identity and the perennial other will always be at stake.

Our last section sees a change, instead of the regular **N.B.** this *e3labels* closes with a visual cartography of the affinities, ideas and inspirations that underscore and feed into the curatorial programme of Cooper Gallery. Unrestricted by time and space, this discursive reader follows and marks the always open lines of flight that occupy every part of our recent thinking and doing.

Throughout this issue, *e3labels* has brought to the fore a complexity of perspectives and positions on identity. This has not been done to enable us to arrive at a definitive statement on ourselves or the other, rather the desire motivating these words has been to pencil in a brief constellation, from which you, our reader, can find your own unexpected points of departure.

Happy reading.

Sophia Yadong Hao

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